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## **NEWS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Honorable Herbert Bateman**  
**Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Readiness**  
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The subcommittee will come to order.

This morning the Military Readiness Subcommittee continues its look at the military readiness of our forces both now and into the future. The administration and the senior leadership in the pentagon continue to claim that our forces are more ready then ever before. Yet, when we visit with various units throughout the military and hear testimony before this subcommittee, as we did just last week, we get a different picture. We continue to hear some disturbing stories.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, this subcommittee conducted a field hearing at Langley AFB, Virginia and on March 4<sup>th</sup>, we held a joint hearing with the Military Personnel subcommittee here in Washington. We heard testimony from every level of the military, from senior Commanders to middle grade officers to Non Commission Officers and finally, we heard testimony from some military spouses.

We were told of personnel shortages in units resulting in 10 to 12 hour days, with weekend duty and training being the accepted norm. A number of witnesses told us of PERSTEMPO so high that major units are averaging over 175 days per year deployed and this figure does not take into account the training days required for the unit to prepare for deployment. It must be pointed out, however, due to the reduced number of personnel available and the long hours required to keep up with the workload, there is a perception that personnel who deploy actually have it better than those who must remain at home station and have to take care of 100 percent of the unit's equipment. This often results in extremely long days with little recognition for their contribution to the deployed force.

In our hearings, we were repeatedly told that the military is working harder and OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO are higher than at any other time in recent memory. The commander of III Corps at Fort

Hood stated that he is “stretching soldiers, their families, and the budget with a blistering operational pace... retention is becoming a problem and will be a challenge this year”. He tells us that a unit at Fort Riley had to borrow 226 soldiers, 30 percent of the unit’s personnel, from outside the battalion to meet a deployment requirement.

The Commander of the 108<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Brigade testified that “manning a battalion for a deployment took soldiers from the entire Brigade, and support from across all of Ft Bliss, as well as 12 additional soldiers from across the XVIII Airborne Corps”. He further stated that, in order to outfit the deploying task force, they had to strip from the rest of the brigade almost every cook, mechanic, supply specialist, generator mechanic and long haul truck driver inside the Brigade as well as every Patriot missile trained officer and NCO. If given another requirement, he told us that he could not outfit another battalion for at least six months. In order to man the deployed battalion, the remainder of the units in the brigade are currently manned at 65 percent .

We have been informed that many Marines are spending in excess of 177 days per year away from home. A Navy spouse told the subcommittee that, although the Navy is very good about keeping to its word with regard to six month deployments, due to ship “workups”, her husband’s next “six month” deployment will actually mean that the ship’s personnel will be gone nine and half months during a 13 month period. These extended separations, the Quality of Life shortcomings at many of our installations, and a perceived continued attack on military benefits exacerbate the anxiety experienced by spouses who are left alone, often with small children, to fend for themselves for long periods of time.

Marine Corps Colonel John Sattler, commander of the Marine’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Regiment, summed it up by saying “we are playing a shell game... we are ready to answer the nation’s 911 (emergency) calls, but not all at the same time.”

We know there has been an ongoing effort within the pentagon to upgrade the process to measure readiness. However, we continue to be puzzled by the conflicting signals we get between what we hear in Washington and what we hear when we talk directly to the men and women who serve in the units in our military services.

It is the perception of this committee that, although the Pentagon has made some effort to broaden the readiness assessment process, the criteria used to determine the status of readiness in the force is still fundamentally the Status of Resources and Training System (SORTS) reporting system. SORTS may work well for what it was designed to do but it doesn’t go far enough. It has been stated in the past that any readiness evaluation system needs to be comprehensive and include all known indicators.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has pointed out that important disconnects have existed historically between formal readiness reports provided by the SORTS system and other information obtained from military personnel in the field. The military personnel data often suggests that readiness is not as good as the SORTS reports indicate. GAO has stated that continuing shortcomings in SORTS need to be addressed if we are to have a credible foundation upon which to build a more comprehensive readiness reporting system. Efforts to address deficiencies in SORTS should include not only efforts to develop additional readiness indicators for building toward a more comprehensive readiness system, but also efforts to ensure that they are used to affect readiness assessments on unit-level basis within each of the services.

We want to find out today if the current readiness assessment system takes into account indicators such as: the amount of time individuals are away from home; the stresses of working harder and longer and doing more with less; the quantity and quality of military training being reduced due to lack of key skill level personnel and having to migrate money from training to Quality of Life demands on our installations; the impact of having to “plug holes” in our assigned strength by borrowing personnel to get a unit up to theater deployment standards.

We are very fortunate to have three panels today that we hope will be able to help us understand where we are with regard to upgrading our readiness evaluation and reporting system. For our first panel, we have Mr. Mark Gebicke, Director of Military Operations and Capabilities, the General Accounting Office, who will give his assessment of the current system for measuring readiness. The second panel includes Mr. Louis Finch, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness, and Brigadier General Stephen B. Plummer, USAF, Deputy Director, Current Readiness and Capabilities, Joint Chiefs of Staff. We have asked this panel for an update of their efforts to develop a process that takes into account all the known readiness indicators, especially any efforts the pentagon is making to find predictive data that will give a good indication of readiness in the future.

Our last panel will consist of Major General D.C. Grange, Director of Operations, Readiness and Mobilization, Department of the Army; Rear Admiral John Craine Jr., Director of Assessments, Department of the Navy; Major General Donald L. Peterson, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations, Department of the Air Force; and Brigadier General Matthew Broderick, Director of Operations Division, Plans, Policy and Operations Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. Each of the military members on this panel has been asked to address readiness trends and their initiatives to capture readiness indicators that more accurately depict the true state of readiness.